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International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

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Committee on Enforced Disappearances
Twelfth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 198th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 6 March 2017, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Walker (Representative of the Secretary-General)
Chair: Mr. Corcuera Cabezut

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary Chair** declared open the twelfth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

2. **The Temporary Chair**, speaking in his capacity as the Chief of the Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section, Human Rights Treaties Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that there had been a number of important developments concerning the Convention and the Committee since the eleventh session. The Conference of the States Parties to the Convention had convened for its first session in December 2016; at the session, the functioning of the Committee had been evaluated positively and the Committee had been confirmed as the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention. Representatives of 22 of the 51 States parties present had taken the floor to praise the Committee's dynamism and efficiency and to offer constructive criticism.

3. The commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention had continued with a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 17 February 2017 at which the Chair of the Committee had delivered a statement and served, together with Mr. Decaux and others, on an expert panel. Addressing the meeting by way of a video message, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had stated that although enforced disappearance, which was taking new and alarming forms, was not becoming less common, the Committee's work had had a significant preventive effect. Calling on all States to recognize the value of the objectives of the Convention, he had set a goal of doubling the number of States that had ratified the Convention within five years. Signatory States that had accepted the recommendation made within the framework of the universal periodic review to ratify the Convention were being targeted by a campaign, organized in the wake of the High Commissioner's call, to encourage them to complete the ratification process.

4. Since the eleventh session, four States — the Central African Republic, Switzerland, Seychelles and Czechia — had ratified or acceded to the Convention, bringing the number of States parties to 56. The slow but steady increase in the number of States parties was gratifying, but it was hoped that the High Commissioner's call would lead to a swifter increase in the number of States parties in the near future. OHCHR would support the effort to increase the number of ratifications and the visibility of the Committee's work through a ratification campaign that would be the Office's main communication strategy for 2017. Committee members would have the opportunity to share their thoughts on the design of the campaign.

5. Later in 2017, the General Assembly would decide whether to allocate the necessary resources for the Committee to meet for an additional week in the biennium 2018-2019. Although the Secretary-General's report on the status of the human rights treaty body system had noted that staffing levels had proved insufficient for addressing requests for urgent action and other matters (A/71/118, paras. 45-48), it had become clear that States were unwilling to allocate additional funding for handling urgent action requests before the review of General Assembly resolution 68/268 in 2020. In the run-up to the review, the Committee would do well to formulate some ideas of its own for a more sustainable treaty body system.

6. Lastly, he wished to bid farewell and pay tribute to the Committee members whose terms would end in June 2017, namely, Mr. Al-Obaidi, Mr. Hazan, Mr. López Ortega and Mr. Yakushiji. He trusted that they would continue to build on what they had achieved as members of the Committee.

7. *Mr. Corcuera Cabezut took the Chair.*

8. **The Chair** said that the Committee would consider the reports of Cuba, Senegal and Ecuador during the session. It would also adopt the lists of issues in relation to the reports submitted by Lithuania and Gabon. In addition, it would discuss its methods of work and a number of substantive matters, including the remarks on the Committee's work made by several States parties during the Conference of the States Parties in December 2016.

9. Many of the States that had attended the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly were not parties to the Convention. The Committee would have to do its part to ensure that all States Members of the United Nations ratified the Convention and that the High Commissioner's goal of doubling the number of ratifications in five years was attained.

10. To date, just six candidates, only one of whom was a woman, had been put forward for the five seats on the Committee that would become open in June 2017. Although States parties had been encouraged to nominate candidates by 3 February, that date had not been intended as a firm deadline. He therefore called on States parties that had not yet done so to nominate experts of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights.

11. The work of the Committee required urgent support. The Committee, like other treaty bodies, needed sufficient resources to deal with an increased workload and the backlog that had accumulated. The secretariat should have the staff and other resources necessary to handle reports, requests for urgent action and other matters.

12. The Committee's public meetings were now streamed over the Internet and that was a significant and welcome development. Stakeholders unable to attend the sessions in Geneva were thus able to follow the Committee's work from anywhere in the world.

13. **Mr. Decaux** said that he had moderated the panel discussion at the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and that the many useful statements that had been made were accessible online. He welcomed the High Commissioner's call to double the number of ratifications of the Convention in five years. That would mean some 10 ratifications a year rather than 5 or 6, but the Committee was now able to press ahead more freely as it was no longer facing the pressure of an upcoming evaluation of its functioning.

14. Attaining the goal set by the High Commissioner would require considerable effort, including on the part of the States that were members of the Group of Friends of the Convention and regional organizations in Africa, Europe and the Americas. Non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions, not to mention Committee members themselves, would also have to be heavily involved in those efforts. In that regard, the members who would be leaving the Committee could be very useful ambassadors for the Convention.

Adoption of the agenda

15. *The provisional agenda* (CED/C/12/1) *was adopted.*

Minute of silence in remembrance of victims of enforced disappearance

16. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in remembrance of victims of enforced disappearance.*

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.30 a.m.